

Book: LBJ thought Castro was behind Kennedy assassination

FP of 11/16/97

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Lyndon Johnson thought Cuban President Fidel Castro played a role in the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy, but worried that a retaliatory strike on Cuba could lead to nuclear war, according to a new book.

He said publicly blaming Mr. Castro would generate a public outcry for an attack on Cuba or the Soviet Union that could "check us into a war that can kill 40 million Americans in an hour."

According to the book, "The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964," by historian Michael R. Beschloss, Mr. Johnson also told the late Sen. Richard Russell in 1964 that he did not believe the conclusion of the Warren Commission, of which Mr. Russell was a member, that Mr. Kennedy was killed by a lone gunman.

The book casts Mr. Russell, D-Ga., as a reluctant member of the

commission who was pressured into signing the report against his will.

"I'm just worn out, fighting over that damned report," Mr. Russell is quoted as saying on one tape. "Well, I don't believe it."

"I don't either," Mr. Johnson said.

Newsweek magazine, in its edition on newsstands today, carries excerpts of the book, which details conversations from the secret tape recordings Mr. Johnson kept running during his stay in the White House. The book, published by Simon & Schuster, is to appear in bookstores this week.

In another conversation with former Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield in May 1964, Mr. Johnson suggests he might use the FBI to investigate Republican campaign contributions to get back at them for investigating his family finances.